

The President. I'll find out. I'll find out.

Governor Arnold A. Schwarzenegger. I just want to add to this because I want to thank the President for coming out here today. I can tell you that when we saw on Monday the flames going out of control and it becoming really a major disaster, I told my assistant that we got to call the President and ask for help. And before I ever had a chance to make that phone call—I remember I was in the middle of a briefing—the President—I was in—I got the phone, they said, it's the President on the phone. And he called me, and he told me that he's really concerned about the fires here in California, and if anything he can do, anything that we need, we should let him know; that all his entire Cabinet and his whole staff, his team, everyone is available.

So I call this quick action, I mean, quicker than I expected, I can tell you that. And since then, we've been talking every day on the phone. And we asked him for an emergency declaration; they got it within 24 hours. We asked for a disaster declaration; we got that within 24 hours. And then he called me back, and he says, "I'm going

to come out because I'm really concerned about the people in California and what they are going through. We want to make sure that we help them get back on their feet." And here he is.

So I call this very unbelievable response from the Federal Government and the Bush administration, from everyone. And from Senator Feinstein—I want to thank you also for the great response, and she was calling us every hour and being concerned. So I would say this is really great response, and you cannot do this without everyone working together. And what we have seen here, unlike other disasters, I mean, how quickly the locals, the State, and the Federal Government came together, and everyone working together was really extraordinary to watch. So I want to thank everyone. I want to thank you again, President, for coming out here today and helping us.

The President. Okay, thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:28 a.m. in the Rancho Bernardo neighborhood. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

Remarks in Escondido, California October 25, 2007

Governor, thank you very much. First thing I want to let the people know out here in southern California is that many across our Nation have been moved by the plight of the citizens who have lost their homes, lost their possessions, and particularly those who have lost their life. It's very important for those who are wondering about their future to know, there's a lot of good citizens all across America who are praying for your future and who really want to stand with you.

I appreciate the leadership of Governor Schwarzenegger. I said earlier, when we

were at the neighborhood, there's no hill he's not willing to charge, no problem he's not willing to solve. And we've got a big problem out here, and I appreciate his leadership. It makes a significant difference when you have somebody in the statehouse willing to take the lead. I've come to make sure that the Federal Government provides the help for people here at the local level.

I do want to thank Senator Feinstein for joining us. I want to thank the local mayors, statehouse folks, the Congresspeople for being with us as well.

Really, it's important for me to come out here and see firsthand the situation. And there's no question, a lot of people are suffering. And there's no question, there's been terrible losses.

I also am out here to make sure these firefighters behind me and the first-responders know how much I appreciate and how much the country appreciates their courage and bravery. Firefighters are on the scene and on the frontlines. The police have helped maintain order. Emergency medical teams have treated the sick. And our National Guard personnel is providing very important assistance. It turns out, when the President shows up, so does a lot of the other brass. I'm proud to be here with General Tuck [Blum],^{*} who runs the entire National Guard Bureau.

All of us associated with the Federal Government, Governor, are here to make sure that the resources at our disposal are deployed to help you. And that's why there's all kinds of people from all different Departments at the Federal level to assess the needs, to listen to the concerns, and to respond. And that's exactly what we've been doing, and that's exactly what we'll continue to do.

As the Governor mentioned, I did just issue an emergency declaration which allows Federal Agencies across the Government to help State and local authorities. It empowers FEMA to provide vital supplies as well as to pay emergency grants to help pay for the cost of firefighting, evacuation shelters, and traffic control.

Our Department of Agriculture and Interior have provided elite firefighters and equipment. As I mentioned, the Department of Defense is in this to help you through NORTHCOM. The military has got assets that we can help you with. General, thanks for coming. We've got a four-star general with us today. He runs NORTHCOM, and the reason he's here, Governor, is to listen to you, find out what

assets we can continue to deploy to help you.

As the Governor mentioned, yesterday I signed a second declaration to help California's recovery and rebuilding efforts. The major disaster declaration authorizes the release of Federal funds for debris removal and long-term assistance to individuals and businessowners. People affected by the fires can now apply for assistance for temporary housing and home repair and low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses.

Now, people here in this part of the world are wondering, is there a number they can call to get help? And here's the number: 1-800-621-FEMA. If you want to find out whether or not you qualify for help, Federal help, just call 1-800-621-FEMA or go to the web site FEMA.gov. And there's a third way that you can find out whether you get help, and that is through a mobile disaster recovery center that FEMA's deployed around this State. And Arnold Schwarzenegger's right. These fires are going to go out because of the bravery of the people behind us, but there's still going to be needs and concerns.

And the final reason I've come is to let you know, we're not going to forget you in Washington, DC; that we want the people to know that there's a better day ahead; that today your life may look dismal, but tomorrow life's going to be better; and to the extent that the Federal Government can help you, we want to do so.

I do want to thank all the volunteers who have stepped forth to help a neighbor in need. There's an impressive number of people that have heard the call that one of their neighbors needs help. And for all of those who are volunteering their time to help somebody get their feet back on the ground, I thank you from the bottom of our Nation's heart.

May God bless those who suffer, may God bless those who are helping the people who are hurting, and may God continue to bless our country. Thank you.

^{*} White House correction.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:24 p.m. in Kit Carson Park. In his remarks, he referred to Lt. Gen. H. Steven Blum, USA, chief, National Guard Bureau; and Gen. Victor E.

Renuart, Jr., USAF, commander, North American Aerospace Defense Command and U.S. Northern Command.

Remarks Following a Meeting With First-Responders in Escondido October 25, 2007

The President. Thank you all very much for letting us come by to say hello to you. I'm proud to be here with the Senator, the Terminator—[laughter]—do you still get called the Terminator?

Governor Arnold A. Schwarzenegger. Absolutely, especially my wife. [Laughter]

The President. You know why we're here—Brian Billbray, the Congressman from here—we're here to, hopefully, inspire you by thanking you from the bottom of our hearts for what you do. I'm telling you, there's a lot of folks that live up in these hills that have their houses because of you. And they're not in a position to thank you, but we are. And so we thank you for helping save lives and save property. We thank you for serving our country.

You know, one of the things I like to do is look in the eyes, to make sure you're getting rest, and I know you're not. [Laughter] I hope there's enough reinforcements coming to make sure that you get your shifts so you can get some sleep, because the citizens are going to count on you for you a while.

These fires are tough, but you know better than anybody how hard it is. And so we're here to compliment you on your courage and your compassion. I know you're working incredible hours, and you've got family members who wonder about you, and so one of the things that we can do is also hope you pass on our best regards to your family members. I'm confident they're inspired by you, but they're wondering about your health and your safety. And so please, when you talk to them, tell them the President, the Senator, the Governor, the Congressman, but most of all, the folks here in the San Diego area and around the State affected by the fires are really appreciative.

And finally, I'd like to ask God's blessings on you and to protect you and guard you. Thanks for being great Americans. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:56 p.m. in the Ray Love Picnic Area at Kit Carson Park. In his remarks, he referred to Sen. Dianne Feinstein.

Remarks Following a Meeting With President Joseph Kabila of the Democratic Republic of the Congo October 26, 2007

President Bush. It's my honor to welcome back to the Oval Office President Kabila. Thanks for coming, sir, the President of the Democratic Republic of the

Congo. The last time the President was here, we talked about his desire to have free and fair elections in his country. Since that time, his country has had free and